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The relationship between parenting styles and children's academic achievement in a sample of Iranian families

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Abstract

The relationship between parenting styles and children's academic achievement was examined in a sample of Iranian families. 371 high school students (191 girls, 180 boys) along with their parents (342 fathers, 364 mothers) were included in this study. All parents were asked to complete Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991). The current grade-point-average (GPA) was calculated for the students' academic achievement. Results indicated that both authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles were negatively associated with children's academic achievement. Permissive parenting style showed no significant association with children's academic achievement. It can be concluded that parenting styles would influence children's academic achievement.

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Keywords: Parenting style; Academic achievement; Family

1. Introduction

Many studies have documented that parenting has a powerful influence in child development and is often associated with child outcomes including school-relevant outcomes (e.g., Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991). Parenting styles can be described as patterns of behaviour that primary caregivers use to interact with their children. These patterns of childrearing create an emotional climate in which the parent's behaviours are expressed (Baumrind, 1971, 1977; Coplan, Hasting, Lagace-Seguin, & Moulton, 2002; Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

Baumrind (1971, 1989, and 1991) and Maccoby and Martin (1983) outlined demanding and responsiveness as two independent dimensions of parenting. Demanding refers to the extent to which parents show control, power assertion, maturity demands, and supervision in their parenting. Responsiveness refers to the extent to which parents show their children affective warmth, emotional expression, acceptance, and support. Based on the degree of parental demanding and responsiveness, four parenting styles have been described (Baumrind, 1991; Maccoby & Martin, 1983): *authoritative* (both demanding and responsive), *authoritarian* (demanding but not responsive), *permissive* (responsive but not demanding), and *neglectful* (neither demanding nor responsive). Each type of parenting is believed to differentially influence child's academic outcomes.

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Different parenting styles have been used in studies examining the association of parenting behaviors with children's academic outcomes (Baumrind, 1972; Chao, 2001; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006; Fletcher, Darling, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1995; Leung, Lau, & Lam, 1998; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1992; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, Darling, 1994; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996). Inconsistent results regarding the effects of parenting styles on children's academic outcomes have been found within western and eastern societies. While children in western societies would benefit more from the authoritative parenting style in terms of academic outcomes (Baumrind, 1972; Fletcher et al., 1995; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996), their counterparts in eastern societies would benefit more from the authoritarian parenting style (Chao, 2001; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006; Leung et al., 1998; Steinberg et al., 1992; Steinberg et al., 1994). It seems that the relationship between parenting styles and children's academic achievements is inconsistent across cultures. The aim of this study was to investigate how parenting styles may relate to children's academic achievements in Iranian families.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and Procedure

Three hundred and seventy one students (191 girls, 180 boys: mean age: 16, age range: 14-18, SD: 1.13) from Tehran high schools in sections 8, 10, 11 and 19 in the academic year 2009-2010 along with their parents (342 fathers, mean age: 46, age range: 34-66, SD: 5.62; and 364 mothers, mean age: 40, age range: 30-57, SD: 5.24) took part as volunteers in the present study. Participants were asked to take part in a "study on family relations and academic achievements" via announcements made by relevant lectures in classrooms. All parents were asked to complete the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991). Students were asked to report their current grade-point-average (GPA) as a measure of academic achievement. Analysis of the data involved both descriptive and inferential statistics including means, standard deviations, Pearson's correlation coefficient, and regression analysis.

2.2. Measures

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991)- This 30-item questionnaire measures three parenting styles including authoritative (10 items), authoritarian (10 items), and permissive (10 items). Parents were asked to fill the PAQ using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Adequate psychometric properties of the PAQ (e.g., Buri, 1991; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006) have been reported. In the present study, internal consistency coefficients of .91, .90, and .91 were obtained for authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles, respectively.

Demographic Questionnaire- Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which included questions covering their sex, age, number of children, parental education and occupation, and parental marital status.

2. Results

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated among parenting styles and children's academic achievement. It was shown that maternal authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles scores had significant correlations with children's academic achievement ($r_s = .14$ and $-.15$, respectively). Permissive parenting style, as well as paternal authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles showed no significant association with children's academic achievement.

Multiple regression analyses with children's academic achievement as the dependent variable, where parenting styles were entered simultaneously into the equation, revealed that only maternal authoritative parenting style could significantly predict children's academic achievement ($R^2 = .04$; see Table 1).

Table 1. Results of regression analysis with parenting styles as predictors and children's academic achievement as dependent variable

Variable	Children's Academic Achievement			
	R ²	F	β	t
Regression	.04	2.27		
Paternal Authoritative Style			-0.01	-0.20
Paternal Authoritarian Style			-0.05	-0.84
Paternal Permissive Style			0.09	1.50
Maternal Authoritative Style			0.14	2.36*
Maternal Authoritarian Style			-0.09	-1.52
Maternal Permissive Style			0.05	0.86

* p value < .05

4. Discussion

The present study examined whether parenting styles were associated with children's academic achievement in a sample of Iranian families. The results revealed that maternal authoritative and authoritarian parenting styles were associated with children's academic achievement in opposite directions. Maternal authoritative style was positively associated with children's academic achievement, while maternal authoritarian style was negatively associated with children's academic achievement. Multiple regression analyses revealed that only maternal authoritative parenting style could significantly predict children's academic achievement. These findings are consistent with the existing literature that has provided evidence of a robust relationship between parenting styles and academic related outcomes in children (Baumrind, 1972; Chao, 2001; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006; Fletcher et al., 1995; Leung et al., 1998; Steinberg et al., 1992, 1994; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996).

Gonzalez, Dona Holbein, and Quilter (2002) recently showed that maternal authoritativeness was related to mastery orientation which is fostered by parental involvement. It is possible that families which provide parental involvement and support, foster children's school adjustment and performance (e.g., Steinberg et al., 1994; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996), school engagement (e.g., Steinberg et al., 1992), independent problem solving and critical thinking (Hess & McDevitt, 1984), and adaptive achievement strategies (Aunola, Stattin, & Nurmi, 2000). According to earlier findings (Ginsburg & Bronstein, 1993; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991), parental autonomy support typical of authoritative parenting provides students with self-regulated behaviours that are necessary for academic outcomes.

Maternal influence on children's academic achievement in this study is in contrast to previous research concluding that children in eastern societies would benefit more from the authoritarian parenting style (Chao, 2001; Dwairy & Menshar, 2006; Leung et al., 1998; Steinberg et al., 1992; Steinberg et al., 1994) rather than the authoritative parenting style. This cultural difference in parenting style might be explained according to the fundamental changes of Iranian women roles during recent decades. Iranian mothers have become more educated, more powerful, and more authoritative during these years. These gender specific new roles might be responsible for the similarity of parenting styles between Iranian and some western mothers in terms of their influence on academic outcomes.

Limitations and implications of the present study: The cross-sectional design of this study does not allow us to draw conclusions about the directions of causality between parenting styles and children's academic achievement. This study included only Iranian parents. Further studies are needed to confirm and verify the results of the present study and to compare them with the relationships between parenting styles and children's academic outcomes of

other cultures. Such studies may lead to a better understanding of the role of parenting styles in preparation of children for academic behaviours. Finally, it must be pointed out that parenting styles may interact with other variables to product positive or negative consequences. Future studies need to be pursued to address this issue. Understanding what contributes to children's academic achievement allows us to better predict outcomes, which may in turn aid in the development of more effective preventive programs, or in identifying people likely have academic problems.

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